

Congratulations to Amanda Gordon, 2016 Gerry D. Howell A+ Educator of the Year!



Amanda Gordon, visual arts teacher at A+ school Diggs-Latham Elementary in Winston-Salem, was named the 2016 Gerry D. Howell A+ Educator of the Year at an A+ network-wide webinar on Thursday, May 5. Ms. Gordon has taught at Diggs-Latham Elementary for the last 12 years. The award recognizes an A+ educator who best exemplifies the values of the A+ Schools Program and its philosophies.

Ms. Gordon's approach to teaching represents true arts integration by incorporating standards from multiple subjects in her visual art lessons, ensuring her students are given many opportunities to show what they have learned throughout the year. Not only do her students have a beautiful art product at the end of a unit, but they have experienced group collaboration, individual work time, and even opportunities to write, sing and dance about their work and subject matter. Ms. Gordon believes that collaboration is a key element in building a successful program. This is evident in her classroom, in her interaction with her fellow teachers and with parents and community leaders. Her collaborative success can be seen in her leadership role for her school's Black History Month Celebration – one of the school's largest events of the year. For example, Ms. Gordon's 4th and 5th grade students collaborated by painting an abstract backdrop with the colors of Kwanzaa, she assisted 1st grade students in writing a spoken word piece with hand drumming, and she included school board members and local college faculty in a student-led assembly. Ms. Gordon's reach goes well beyond the walls of her art room!



Ms. Gordon is also the A+ Coordinator at Diggs-Latham. In that role, she has kept her school connected and engaged with A+, specifically by offering support and resources to her staff to deepen arts integration in all classrooms. She created an A+ blog with useful links, photo galleries and ideas for arts integration: <http://diggs-latham-plus.blogspot.com>. In recommending Ms. Gordon for this honor, Penny Freeland, Visual Arts Administrator for Winston-Salem/Forsyth Schools stated, "I enjoy working with Mrs. Gordon because her enthusiasm for the arts, arts integration and learning is inspiring! I cannot think of anyone more deserving, and I wholeheartedly support Mrs. Gordon's nomination for this award."

Ms. Gordon holds a bachelor of fine arts and K-12 certification from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She is also National Board Certified in early and middle childhood art.

As the 2016 A+ Educator of the Year, Ms. Gordon will receive \$250 worth of classroom arts products generously donated by Crayola, will attend NCCAT's Teacher Leadership Academy with other statewide and district Educators of the Year, and will serve as an "ambassador" for the A+ Schools Program for the upcoming school year.

The Gerry D. Howell A+ Educator of the Year Award was created in memory of Gerry D. Howell, long-time A+ Schools Program executive director and the inspiration behind the creative teaching and learning of countless educators, administrators and students across N.C. To honor her legacy, each year the A+ Schools Program selects one dedicated A+ educator who best exemplifies these values of the A+ Schools Program and its philosophies:

- challenges, motivates and inspires students by supporting a learning environment that is art-filled, creative, relevant, engaging and reflective
- is respected by peers, parents and students
- is caring and creative, seeking to enrich the lives of all students
- demonstrates a commitment to the arts, a collaborative spirit, leadership and flexibility
- has a dedication to life-long learning

For more information about the Gerry D. Howell A+ Educator of the Year Award or the A+ Schools Program, please visit <http://aplus-schools.ncdcr.gov>.